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New Immigrants' Assessments of Their Life in Canada

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..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0^s	value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
^{p}	preliminary
^{r}	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
^{E}	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published

Table of Contents

Abstract 5

Executive summary 6

1 Introduction 8

2 Literature review 8

3 Data and methods 11

3.1 Data 11

3.2 Sample attrition 18

4 Results 21

4.1 Descriptive results 21

4.2 Multivariate Results 22

5 Discussion and conclusions 29

References 31

Abstract

In this paper, the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) is used to examine how immigrants in the 2000-2001 landing cohort subjectively assess their life in Canada. The paper provides a useful complement to other studies of immigrant outcomes that often focus on employment, income or health. Four years after landing, about three-quarters of LSIC respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their life in Canada, and a comparable proportion said their expectations of life in Canada had been met or exceeded. Nearly 9 out of 10 said that, if given the chance, they would make the same decision again to come to Canada. A broad range of demographic, social and economic characteristics are associated with subjective assessments. Positive assessments of life in Canada are less prevalent among individuals in their thirties and forties, and university graduates and principal applicants in the skilled worker admission category, than they are among other groups. While assessments of life in Canada are correlated with economic factors such as personal income, they are also correlated with social factors such as relationships with neighbours and perceptions of discrimination.

Executive summary

To date, much of the research on immigrant outcomes in Canada has focused on labour market and income characteristics in the years after landing. A recurring message is that immigrants who landed in the 1990s and 2000s are not faring as well as those who landed in earlier decades. One question this raises is whether there is a gap between immigrants' expectations of life in Canada and their subsequent experiences of it. In this paper, the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) is used to examine how immigrants in the 2000-2001 landing cohort subjectively assess their life in Canada. More specifically, to what extent are they personally satisfied with their life in Canada? How does life in Canada measure up to their expectations? If given the opportunity, would they make the same decision to come Canada again? Responses to these questions are examined across a broad range of demographic, social and economic characteristics.

Most LSIC respondents have positive assessments. Four years after landing, almost three-quarters are satisfied or very satisfied with their life in Canada. One-fifth say they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, while 7% say they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. In terms of expectations, 43% say that life in Canada is somewhat better or much better than they expected it would be, 33% say it is about what they had expected, and 24% say it is somewhat worse or much worse than they had expected. Finally, four years after landing, 87% of LSIC respondents say that if they had to make the decision again, they would still come to Canada.

In spite of the fact that there was a considerable attrition from the LSIC sample over the four-year period of the survey, there is no evidence that it was the most dissatisfied immigrants who left the sample.

A broad range of demographic, economic and social characteristics are associated with subjective assessments. Positive assessments are most prevalent among immigrants aged 15 to 34, and are less prevalent among those aged 35 to 54. Positive assessments are negatively correlated with educational attainment: university graduates are significantly less likely than others to say they are satisfied with their life in Canada, or that their expectations of life in Canada have been met. Across immigration admission categories, positive assessments are more prevalent among family-class immigrants and refugees than among principal applicants in the skilled worker category. The likelihood of expressing positive assessments of life in Canada is strongly correlated with self-assessed health status and self-assessed capacity to cope with everyday tasks.

Many aspects of the settlement process are correlated with assessments of life in Canada. Immigrants who encountered problems accessing housing, health care or education/training are less likely to be satisfied with life in Canada than those who did not encounter problems. They are also less likely to say their expectations have been met or exceeded. Those who felt they had to change their values or behaviours to adapt to life in Canada, and who found such changes difficult to make, are less likely than others to be satisfied with their life in Canada or to say they would make the same immigration decision again. There is also a strong monotonic correlation between perceived discrimination and subjective assessments, with immigrants who say they sometimes, or often, experience discrimination or unfair treatment, are least likely to express positive assessments of their life in Canada. In terms of social capital, positive ties with neighbours, contact with friends and participation in religious services are all associated with positive assessments.

Personal income is correlated with two of the three outcome measures—satisfaction and expectations. Compared with individuals who have no personal income, those with incomes of

$40,000 or more are significantly more likely to be satisfied with life in Canada and to say life in Canada is somewhat better or much better than expected. Among the 80% of LSIC respondents with personal incomes below $40,000, assessments of Canada do not vary significantly across income groups. The same patterns are evident when household income is considered.

1 Introduction

The experiences of recent immigrants in Canada have received considerable attention from the media and researchers since the mid-1990s. Much of this attention has focused on the labour market and financial outcomes of immigrants, such as the extent to which they find employment in their intended field, experience upward earnings mobility and obtain incomes above low-income thresholds. A recurring message is that immigrants who landed in the 1990s and 2000s are not faring as well as those who landed in earlier decades (Picot and Sweetman, 2005; Picot 2004). Deteriorating economic outcomes, coupled with rising levels of educational attainment among more recent landing cohorts, raise the question of whether there is a large and perhaps widening gap between immigrants' expectations of life in Canada and their subsequent experiences of it.

Other evidence offers a more favourable starting point. Immigrants in the 2000-2001 landing cohort express positive views of the social and political environment in Canada, pointing to the importance of safety and security, rights and freedoms and peace and stability as aspects of Canadian life they like most (Schellenberg and Maheux 2007). They also point to these factors as central in their decision to settle permanently in Canada. Furthermore, most immigrants, including those in economic admission categories, say they came to Canada for non-economic reasons, such as joining family members already here, providing a brighter future for their children and, enjoying a high quality of life. In this context, assessments of life in Canada may be more positive than economic outcomes alone might suggest.

In this paper, we use the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) to examine how immigrants in the 2000-2001 landing cohort subjectively assess their life in Canada. More specifically, to what extent are they personally satisfied with their life in Canada? How has life in Canada measured up to their expectations of it? If given the opportunity, would they make the same decision again to come Canada? Responses to these questions are examined across a broad range of demographic, social and economic characteristics.

Immigrants' assessments of their life in Canada warrant investigation for several reasons. First, the well-being of all Canadians is a central objective of public policy and is an important goal in its own right. Measures of **subjective** well-being, such as those used in this paper, offer a useful complement to other approaches that focus on employment, income or health. Second, immigrants' assessments of their life in Canada can shed light on the factors that contribute to (or detract from) a positive settlement experience, with potential implications for settlement programs. Third, the capacity to attract and retain skilled immigrants is increasingly viewed as a key ingredient for sustaining economic growth in western nations. Such capacity may be reduced if immigrant dissatisfaction is associated with higher rates of onward or return migration, or if dissatisfied immigrants tend to dissuade friends and family abroad from joining them in the host country.

2 Literature review

The question of what makes people satisfied has been central to philosophy since antiquity and has been a focus of research in a variety of disciplines in modern times as well. Research in the field of subjective well-being is of particular relevance to studies of immigrants' assessments of life in their host country (see reviews in Veenhoven 1996; Diener, Suh and Oishi 1997). In this approach, an individual's well-being is not defined by external criteria, such as income, wealth or body mass index, but rather in terms of his or her own subjective assessments, thus giving "...priority and respect to people's own views of their lives." (Diener, Suh and Oishi 1997). This

internal perspective is typically conceptualized along two dimensions. The first involves the cognitive appraisals people make of their life; that is, conscious evaluative judgments about satisfaction with their life as a whole or with specific aspects of it, such as work or marriage (Diener, Suh and Oishi 1997). The second dimension involves emotional states or moods, including positive affect such as happiness, joy or pride and negative affect such as sadness, anger or anxiety. Cognitive appraisals and emotional states are correlated, although the evaluative judgments people express have been found to be less responsive to short-term situational contexts than emotional states. Our analysis is most closely akin to cognitive appraisals, focusing on the evaluative assessments that immigrants make of their life in Canada.

Subjective well-being research has identified a broad range of factors associated with life satisfaction, some of which have been replicated in a smaller subset of literature on life satisfaction among immigrants. Our literature review draws on both and is deliberately broad in scope.[1]

Demographic characteristics, health status and personality traits

A number of demographic variables are generally found to be correlated with life satisfaction among the general population. There is a well-documented U-shaped correlation between age and satisfaction, with satisfaction levels lower among individuals in their thirties and forties than among individuals in younger and older age groups (Helliwell and Putnam 2004). Individuals who are married or living in common-law are generally found to have higher levels of life satisfaction than those who have never been married, widowed, separated or divorced (Helliwell and Putnam 2004). In the aggregate, women tend to report higher life satisfaction than men, although gender differences are not significant in several studies focused on immigrants (Fugl-Meyer, Melin and Fugl-Meyer 2002; Remennick 2005).

Education is an often-reported correlate of subjective well-being, with levels of life satisfaction rising in tandem with educational attainment. However, Helliwell and Putnam (2004) note that this correlation tends to diminish or disappear when other factors such as health and employment status are taken into account. In this respect, education may be an instrumental variable that improves health, and in turn satisfaction, but which does not influence subjective well-being directly.

There is a well-documented positive correlation between health and subjective well-being. Helliwell and Putnam (2004, p. 1440) report in their work that "...as in many other studies, self-assessed health status is the single most important correlate of subjective well-being..."

Another central theme in subjective well-being research is the role played by personality characteristics. Traits such as social assertiveness, empathy, extraversion and internal locus of control are among those consistently found to be correlated with subjective well-being among the general population. (For a recent meta-analysis see Steel, Schmidt and Shultz 2008). Correlations between personality traits and life satisfaction have been documented in a few studies of immigrants. For example, Young (2001) reports that refugees who have high self-esteem and internal locus of control maintain higher levels of life satisfaction under conditions of migration stress. Uksul and Greenglass (2005) find that proactive coping and optimism are negatively correlated with depression and, to a lesser extent, positively correlated with life satisfaction among Turkish migrants in Toronto, while Vohra and Adair (2000) report that guilt

1. The subjective well-being literature is immense, with large bodies of research generated in a variety of disciplinary fields (e.g., cross-cultural psychology, neurology, social capital and economics). Our review is intended to identify the major approaches, but is far from exhaustive.

over leaving the country of birth is negatively correlated with life satisfaction among Indian immigrants in Canada.

Settlement experiences

The immigrants' experiences in the host country have also been found to be correlated with levels of satisfaction. Perceptions of acceptance and welcome, particularly perceived discrimination, have received some research attention. Sam (2001) and Chow (2007) find a negative correlation between perceived discrimination and life satisfaction among immigrant and international students enrolled in colleges and universities, with students who said they had experienced discrimination expressing lower levels of satisfaction than students who said they had not. Vohra and Adair (2000) and Ying (1998) document the same correlation among samples of adults. The negative correlation between perceived discrimination and life satisfaction is also reported in a broad study of immigrants in 13 countries (Vedder, van de Vijver and Liebkind 2006). In an Australian study, Fozdar and Torezani (2008) note the apparent paradox of high levels of perceived discrimination in combination with positive reports of subjective well-being among refugees. Fozdar and Torezani (2008, p. 30) argue that their negative experiences and perceptions were expressed as 'contained disappointment,' rather than as "...serious dissatisfaction with life generally, orientation to Australia or negative subjective well-being."

In the field of cross-cultural psychology, a central theme is how individuals adapt to the changing cultural contexts in which they are located. New immigrants may find themselves in a social and cultural milieu that is far different from that of their country of origin, facing different sets of norms, attitudes and behaviours. A variety of responses may be undertaken in this context (see Berry and Sam 1997; Berry 1997). An individual's capacity to adjust 'behavioural repertoires' to the new milieu vary, and for some the strains associated with this process may have implications for well-being, including satisfaction with life (Roccas, Horenczyk and Schwartz 2000; Berry and Kim 1988).

In addition to the social and psychological aspects of settlement, immigrants also face a variety of logistical challenges. Some of these, such as navigating an unfamiliar city or finding housing, may be overcome fairly soon after arrival. Others, such as accessing health services, may be an ongoing challenge (Schellenberg and Maheux 2007). Obstacles or frustrations of this sort may influence immigrants' assessments of life in their host country. Tran and Nguyen (1994) find that unmet health-care needs are associated with lower levels of life satisfaction among male Indochinese refugees in the United States. More broadly, the 'hassles' and 'uplifts' individuals encounter on a daily basis have been found to be correlated with satisfaction (Hart 1999).

Social capital

Studies of life satisfaction among the general population show a positive correlation between social ties and well-being. For example, Helliwell and Putnam (2004, p. 1435) report that "...social capital is strongly linked to subjective well-being through many independent channels and in several different forms." The relationship between social ties and life satisfaction has also been documented among immigrant populations. For example, Ying (1992) finds that among Chinese-American immigrants, life satisfaction is negatively correlated with social isolation and positively correlated with friendship ties and participation. Likewise, a positive correlation between satisfaction and contact with friends is documented among immigrants by Sam (2001) and Chow (2007).

Material well-being

The relationship between material well-being and subjective well-being has been central in life satisfaction research for over 40 years and has been advanced using both nations and individuals as the unit of analysis (Veenhoven 1996). At the individual level, the relationship between income and subjective well-being is complex. As noted, "differences in life-satisfaction across individuals are not proportional to differences in their income." (Boarini, Johansson and Mira d'Ercole 2006, p. 35); the correlation between decreases in income and declines in life satisfaction tend to be stronger than the correlation between increases in income and improvements in life satisfaction; and changes in non-financial characteristics, such as health, education, and social ties, are associated with larger changes in life satisfaction than gains in income.

The relationship between income and satisfaction may have particular relevance for new immigrants given variations in the strength of the correlation between income and satisfaction across the income distribution. Specifically, Diener et al. (1993) report that the correlation between income and satisfaction is strongest at the bottom of the income distribution (less than US$15,000) and the correlation decreases steadily above this threshold. Given the over-representation of recently-landed immigrants at the bottom of the income distribution (Picot 2008), it may be that income is a more important correlate of life satisfaction for them than for other groups. The strength of this correlation may also diminish over time, as earnings tend to rise with years of residence in the host country.

The employment and income characteristics of new immigrants may be correlated with life satisfaction in additional ways. As Diener, Suh and Oishi (1997) note, some theories of subjective well-being posit that individuals are satisfied when they are able to achieve their goals. While some goals are universal, such as the desire to meet one's basic needs, others are more idiosyncratic. Hence, the goals people seek to achieve are shaped by their location in the life course, their circumstances and histories, their preferences and tastes and so on. In this context, the goals sought by immigrants in the years immediately after landing, and in turn, the factors correlated with their subjective well-being, may be different from those of more well-established immigrants or native-born persons. Subjective well-being is also conceptualized in comparative terms. One variant of this is Michalos' (1985) Multiple Discrepancy Theory, which posits that life satisfaction is inferred from the discrepancy between 'how life is' and 'how life ought to be.' Individuals may use a variety of benchmarks for such comparisons including (i) what they want, (ii) what they had earlier in life, (iii) what they expected to have, (iv) what they think other people have and, (v) what they feel they deserve (Veenhoven 1996).

3 Data and methods

3.1 Data

Data for this study were drawn from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC). The target population of the survey, which was conducted jointly by Statistics Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, includes all immigrants who (1) landed in Canada between October 1, 2000, and September 30, 2001, (2) were age 15 or older at the time of

landing, and (3) landed from abroad having applied through a Canadian Mission Abroad.[2] The sampling frame for the LSIC was an administrative database of all landed immigrants to Canada maintained by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.[3]

Three LSIC questionnaires were fielded during the course of the survey. Approximately 12,000 immigrants were interviewed between April 2001 and May 2002, about six months after landing in Canada. Approximately 9,300 of the same immigrants were located and interviewed in 2003 (about two years after landing), and about 7,700 were located and interviewed a third time (about four years after landing). These three interviews/questionnaires are referred to as 'Wave 1,' 'Wave 2' and 'Wave 3.' The approximately 7,700 respondents included in all three waves are nationally representative of approximately 157,600 new immigrants, of whom 104,400 are economic immigrants, 42,600 are family-class immigrants and 9,700 are refugees.

LSIC respondents were asked several evaluative questions about their life in Canada. They were asked about their satisfaction with their life in Canada during the Wave 1 and Wave 3 interviews. The Wave 1 question read:

> Now I would like to finish with a few general questions about life in Canada. Generally speaking, how satisfied are you personally with your experience in Canada so far?

Respondents answered using a five-point scale ranging from "completely dissatisfied" to "completely satisfied." In Wave 3, respondents were asked:

> Using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "Very dissatisfied" and 5 means "Very satisfied," how would you rate your level of satisfaction with your life in Canada?

In all three waves, LSIC respondents were asked to compare their experience in Canada with their expectations of it and also to reflect on their immigration decision:

> Generally speaking, would you say that your experience in Canada has been (i) much better than you expected; (ii) somewhat better; (iii) about what you expected; (iv) somewhat worse; (v) much worse than you expected?
>
> If you had to make the decision again, would you come to Canada?

We use the term 'assessments of life in Canada' to refer to these three outcome measures. Given the design of the LSIC, these questions refer to the period from six months to four years after landing, which is a more specific reference period than is typically used in studies of general life satisfaction. Furthermore, subjective well-being research generally distinguishes between satisfaction with life overall and satisfaction in specific domains, such as job or marital satisfaction. Our analysis falls somewhere between, since 'life in Canada' is more limited in

2. Individuals who applied and landed from within Canada were excluded from the survey, because they may have been in the country for a considerable length of time before landing and may therefore demonstrate different integration characteristics than those of individuals arriving more recently. Refugees claiming asylum from within Canada were also excluded from the survey. Interviews were conducted in 1 of 15 languages covering approximately 93% of the new immigrant population in Canada and were conducted face-to-face or by telephone, when a face-to-face interview was not possible. For more information on the LSIC, see Statistics Canada (no date).
3. The LSIC sample was created using a two-stage stratified sampling method. The first stage involved the selection of Immigrating Units (IU), using a probability proportional to size method, and the second stage involved the random selection of 1 member within each IU. Only the selected member was followed throughout the survey. Individuals aged 15 or older in each IU were eligible to be selected as a respondent.

scope than 'life in general,' but may reflect evaluative judgments across multiple domains, such as family, employment and community ties.

Our analysis is deliberately broad in scope, drawing on the breadth of information available in the LSIC and key findings from the subjective well-being research. The following independent variables are included our analysis. The distribution of respondents across each is shown in Table 1.

Demographic characteristics, health status and coping

LSIC respondent's sex, age and education at landing are included in our analytical models.[4] Self-assessed health status is included, using respondent's evaluations of their health on a five-point scale ranging from poor to excellent.[5] Consistent with the literature, we expect self-assessed health status to be positively correlated with favourable assessments of life in Canada.

The LSIC does not include the detailed battery of questions that psychologists use to construct psychometric measures of traits, such as assertiveness or locus of control. However, LSIC respondents were asked:

> In general, how would you rate your ability to deal with the everyday tasks in your life, such as family and work responsibilities?

This measure of self-assessed coping capacity is included to, at least partially, account for individual personality differences since these likely affect self-assessments of coping skills.[6] The variable is expected to be positively correlated with favourable assessments of life in Canada.

4. Marital status and the presence of children were included in earlier versions, but were not significantly associated with immigrants' assessments of life in Canada, and were subsequently dropped. Also, measures of self-assessed competence in English and French were included in earlier versions, but results varied widely depending on the specification used. The variables were dropped because of this volatility and associated difficulties in interpreting the results.
5. In our analysis we aggregated the bottom two categories ("poor" and "fair") into a single group, with "good," "very good," and "excellent" retained as the other response categories.
6. Veenhoven (1996, p. 26–27) argues that the psychological traits associated with subjective well-being often 'boil down' to "...personal capability in dealing with the problems of life," "psychological resilience," and "ability to control ones' environment." These themes are echoed in the LSIC question regarding self-assessed capacity to cope with everyday tasks.

Table 1
Distribution of respondents across independent variables (Wave 3 unless otherwise noted)

	percent
Total	**100.0**
Variables	
Sex	
Male	49.5
Female	50.5
Age group	
15 to 24	10.5
25 to 34	29.8
35 to 44	35.4
45 to 54	14.5
55 or older	9.9
Education at arrival	
Less than high school	14.0
High school or some post-secondary	14.9
Post-secondary diploma or certificate	17.2
University degree	53.9
Self-assessed health status	
Excellent (reference group)	23.0
Very good	37.2
Good	31.8
Fair or poor	8.0
Self-assessed capacity to cope with everyday tasks	
Excellent (reference group)	22.5
Very good	46.1
Good	27.7
Fair or poor	3.7
Immigrant category	
Skilled worker - principal applicant	34.6
Skilled worker - spouse and dependents	25.4
Family class	27.0
Refugee	6.2
Other	6.8
Lived in Canada before (Wave 1)	
No	91.2
Yes	8.8
Perceived discrimination/unfair treatment	
None	72.2
Rarely	9.1
Sometimes	15.1
Most or all the time	3.5
Difficulty adapting to life in Canada	
No need to adapt	41.2
Adapted without diffculty	37.9
Adapted with difficulty	19.9
Missing	1.0
Problem accessing housing	
No	92.5
Yes	7.5

See the note at the end of the table.

Table 1 (continued)
Distribution of respondents across independent variables (Wave 3 unless otherwise noted)

	percent
Problem accessing health care	
No	80.1
Yes	19.9
Problem accessing education	
No	83.0
Yes	17.0
Perceptions of neighbours	
Not met them; don't know; neither friendly nor unfriendly	24.6
Unfriendly	2.5
Friendly	53.7
Very friendly	19.1
Contact with friends in Canada	
Daily	18.9
Weekly (reference group)	53.4
Monthly or less, no friends	27.7
Participation in religious services	
None	84.8
Less than weekly	5.4
Weekly or more	9.8
Participation in organizations (excluding religious)	
None	81.2
Less than weekly	10.7
Weekly or more	8.2
Full-time employment status	
Not employed full-time	44.0
Employed full-time	56.0
Personal income	
No income	21.8
$1 to $9,999	16.4
$10,000 to $19,999	16.1
$20,000 to $29,999	14.7
$30,000 to $39,999	10.8
$40,000 to $59,999	12.1
$60,000 or more	8.1
Housing tenure	
Owned without mortgage	4.4
Own with mortgage	44.2
Rent	47.7
Other	3.8
Relative material well-being (Wave 2)	
Better	42.8
About the same	29.0
Worse	26.9
Missing	1.3
Better	83.3
About the same	12.8
Worse	2.7
Missing	1.3

See the note at the end of the table.

Table 1 (concluded)
Distribution of respondents across independent variables (Wave 3 unless otherwise noted)

	percent
Gross domestic product per capita at purchasing power parity (2001 US$)	
Less than $2,000	5.7
$2,000 to $3,999	36.2
$4,000 to $5,999	32.6
$6,000 to $7,999	7.2
$8,000 to $14,999	5.5
$15,000 or more	12.7
Diagnostic statistic	number
Weighted observations	157,615

Note: The percentage distribution of respondents for each variable may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The immigration process and settlement experiences

Canada's immigration policy has been guided by three broad objectives: to reunite families, to fulfill the country's international obligations and humanitarian tradition with respect to refugees, and to foster a strong viable economy in all regions of Canada. These objectives are reflected in the admission categories of immigration through which people are admitted to Canada as permanent residents. Five admission categories are identified in our analysis: principal applicants in the skilled worker category; spouses and dependents of skilled workers; family-class immigrants; refugees; and others.[7]

About 1 out of 10 LSIC respondents had lived in Canada prior to immigrating, often on a student or work visa. Prior residents who subsequently immigrate to Canada may be a self-selected group, comprised of individuals whose past experiences in the country were particularly positive. They may also have more realistic expectations of life in Canada than those with no prior residence. Sam (2001) reports that life satisfaction among international students is positively correlated with information received prior to arrival. Furthermore, individuals who had previously resided in Canada may have social networks, work experience or other assets that facilitate settlement. For these reasons, we expect prior residents to express more favourable assessments than other immigrants.

Other aspects of the immigration process were considered in earlier versions of our analysis. The presence of family members in Canada at the time of landing was examined, with the expectation that this would be positively correlated with favourable assessments. However, this was not the case and the variable was dropped. Reasons for immigrating to Canada were also considered. In his study of immigrant high-school students in Toronto, Chow (2007) finds that non-economic motivations for immigrating were positively correlated with life satisfaction. Reasons for immigrating were included in earlier versions of our models but did not yield significant results, and separate multivariate models were run for immigrants who had (or had not) immigrated for economic reasons. Again, this did not yield noteworthy results, and reasons for immigrating were dropped from the analysis.

In terms of experiences after landing, LSIC respondents were asked if they had experienced discrimination or had been treated unfairly by others because of their ethnicity, culture, race or skin colour, language or accent, or religion. Those who said "yes" were asked about the

7. The category 'other' includes business immigrants, provincial nominees, and other immigrants landed from abroad.

frequency of such experiences. This variable is included with the expectation that perceived discrimination will be negatively correlated with favourable assessments of Canada. In addition, respondents were asked if they felt they had to change their values or way of thinking or behaving in order to adapt to living in Canada, and if so, how difficult they found it to make such changes. This variable is also included with the expectation that individuals experiencing difficulties will have less favourable assessments.

Turning to some of the logistical aspects of settlement, LSIC respondents were asked if they had encountered problems accessing health care, enrolling in training or educational programs or finding housing. A set of 'yes/no' dummy variables is included with the expectation that logistical problems will be negatively correlated with assessments of life in Canada.

Social capital

Four measures of social capital are included in our analysis: frequency of contact with friends; perceived friendliness of neighbours; frequency of attendance at religious services; and frequency of involvement in other groups or organizations. All four measures are expected to be correlated with positive assessments of Canada.

Material well-being

Three variables pertaining to material well-being are included in our analysis model. The first is employment status, as satisfaction levels are generally found to be lower among unemployed than employed individuals. The second is personal income[8] and the third is housing tenure. All three are expected to be associated with positive assessments of Canada.

Comparisons with the country of origin

In addition to the variables listed above, a set of supplementary models is presented including three additional variables: (i) respondents' assessments of their material well-being after two years in Canada ("things like a car, home and disposable income"), compared to their situation before coming to Canada, (ii) respondents assessments of their quality of life in Canada ("things like safety, freedom and pollution"), compared to their situation before coming to Canada,[9] and (iii) gross domestic product (GDP) per capita at purchasing power parity in their country of birth.[10] These variables are included on the grounds that immigrants' assessments of Canada may be informed by comparisons against other benchmarks, such as prior circumstances. Positive assessments of Canada are expected to be more prevalent among immigrants who say their material well-being and quality of life are better now than they used to be. However, these variables are subjective assessments of life now and in the past, and may capture the same underlying issues as our dependent variables. We present the results given

8. Personal and household income were alternatively included in the multivariate models. Personal income was more strongly correlated—at higher levels of statistical significance than household income—and hence was retained.
9. In Wave 2, the specific questions read: "In terms of your material well-being, that is, things like a car, home, disposable income, etc., how do you consider you and your family's situation compared to before you came to Canada? Would you say its better, about the same, or worse?" And, "In terms of your quality of life, that is, things like safety, freedom, pollution, etc., how do you consider you and your family's situation compared to before you came to Canada? Would you say its better, about the same, or worse?"
10. GDP per capita figures (at purchasing power parity) are taken from Penn World Tables and the World Bank. Of the respondents in our sample, 78% report that their last country of residence was their country of birth.

the conceptual relevance of these variables, but do so in a set of supplementary models given the potential endogeneity.

Changes in assessments of Canada over time

Our analysis largely focuses on respondents' assessments of their life in Canada at Wave 3—four years after landing—rather than on changes in individuals' assessments over time. This is because the satisfaction question was not asked at Wave 2 and because wording and placement of the satisfaction question changed from Wave 1 to Wave 3, which raises the possibility that differences over time reflect survey design rather than respondents' views.[11] Moreover, several key independent variables, including capacity to cope with daily tasks, perceived discrimination, adaptation to life in Canada and perceptions of neighbours were not asked at Wave 1. That being said, multivariate models, including a reduced set of independent variables, are run using pooled information from all three LSIC waves. These models include a variable identifying whether an individual's assessment of his or her life in Canada was provided six months, two years or four years after landing, allowing us to determine if his or her assessment became either more positive or more negative over time.

In terms of statistical techniques, ordered logistic regression models are run on the satisfaction and expectation questions to take full advantage of the five-point response categories. A logistic regression model was run on the question regarding the decision to come to Canada. Predicted probabilities were calculated from the models, setting other covariates to their mean values. We focus on these predicted probabilities in our discussion for ease of presentation. All models were calculated using bootstrap weights to correct variance estimates for survey design. Before turning to our results, it is critical to first address the issue of sample attrition, as this has fundamental implications for this study.

3.2 Sample attrition

Of the 12,040 immigrants who completed the LSIC six-month questionnaire, 7,716 were subsequently located and completed questionnaires two and then four years after landing. The other 4,324 were not retained in the sample either because they were not relocated, or were unwilling to complete subsequent questionnaires.[12] This attrition rate of 37%[13] raises the question of whether it was the most dissatisfied immigrants who were lost. If dissatisfied immigrants were more likely than others to move, either within Canada or abroad in search of better opportunities, the chances of retaining them in the sample would have been disproportionately low. This would also be the case if dissatisfied immigrants were more likely than others to refuse to be re-interviewed. In either case, the remaining LSIC sample would disproportionately comprise satisfied respondents, thus casting doubts on any conclusions

11. Of particular note is the fact that in Wave 3, the question on satisfaction with life in Canada was preceded by a battery of questions regarding the greatest difficulties respondents had to deal with since coming to Canada. This emphasis on negative experiences may have a negative impact on satisfaction responses. In Wave 1, the question on satisfaction with life in Canada was placed at the beginning of the survey module.
12. The loss of a respondent over the course of the LSIC may have occurred for many reasons, of which return and onward migration are only two. Respondents could also have been lost from the sample because they had moved within Canada and could not be relocated, or if they were found, because they were unable or unwilling to answer the LSIC questionnaire a second or third time. Hence, the retention rates reported in this section should not be interpreted as indicators of return or onward migration.
13. The attrition rate of 37% is based on a weighted estimate (using the Wave 1 weight) and hence does not correspond to the unweighted counts of survey respondents.

drawn regarding immigrants' assessments of life in Canada. Our analysis indicates that this is not the case.

To address this issue, respondents who completed the Wave 1 questionnaire were divided into two groups: those who completed both the Wave 2 and Wave 3 questionnaires (and hence were retained in the sample), and those who did not. The percentage of respondents with specific characteristics who were retained in the sample; the odds of respondents with specific characteristics being retained in the sample, after controlling for other factors; and the compositional characteristics of respondents who were and were not retained in the sample are shown in Table 2.

Overall, 63% of the respondents who completed the first LSIC questionnaire (Wave 1) went on to complete the second and third questionnaires as well (Waves 2 and 3). The shares that were retained in the sample did not vary across responses to the questions on satisfaction, expectations or the decision to immigrate. For example, 63.8% of immigrants who were completely satisfied with life in Canada after six months were retained, compared to 64.7% of those who were completely dissatisfied. Likewise, 63.5% of those who said life in Canada was much better than expected were retained, compared to 65.3% of those who said life was much worse than expected. The same patterns (or lack thereof) are evident when satisfaction at Wave 2, and the likelihood of being retained in the Wave 3 sample, are considered (data not shown).

When assessed in terms of sex, age group and immigrant admission categories, differences in retention are modest. The largest differences are found among respondents aged 35 to 44, who were slightly more likely than average to be retained (67.6%) and among the small number of respondents aged 55 or older, who were somewhat less likely (54.2%). Across immigrant admissions categories, 69.5% of refugees were retained in the sample compared with 58.4% of family-class immigrants.[14]

Turning to other possible sources of selection bias, one might expect the likelihood of remaining in the LSIC sample to be correlated with the occupations in which immigrants intended to work. Immigrants in the 2000-2001 landing cohort, who had planned on working as electrical engineers, computer programmers and software developers, were not in Canada long before the downturn of the high-tech sector. Canadian-born and immigrant workers alike had to find new jobs (Frenette 2007), and under these circumstances, immigrants may have opted to return to their country of origin or migrate onward in search of employment opportunities. If this were the case, one would expect a smaller-than-average share of high-tech workers to be retained in the sample.[15] More broadly, given the well-publicized challenges that many highly-educated immigrants face in finding work in their field, one might expect satisfaction levels and, in turn, retention rates to be lowest among university graduates. Evidence does not support either hypothesis. LSIC respondents intending to work in high-tech occupations were just as likely to be retained in the sample as respondents intending to work in other occupations, and university graduates were just as likely as respondents with less than high school education to be retained. Overall, it is the **lack** of variability across occupation and education categories that is most striking.

14. Readers should note that the population weight that is used in all analyses of the LSIC takes into account variations in sample attrition across variables such as sex, age and immigration category.
15. In addition to the downturn of the high-technology sector, the experiences of the LSIC landing cohort may have also been shaped by policy changes in the early 2000s. For example, opportunities to migrate onwards, particularly to the United States, may have been constrained by changes in security and immigration policies enacted in the wake of 9/11.

Table 2
Selected characteristics of Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada survey respondents who were retained or not retained throughout the survey

	Retained in the sample	Probability of being retained in the sample	Compositional characteristics of respondents	
			Retained in the sample	Not retained in the sample
	percent	odds ratio	percent	
Total	**63.0**	...	**100.0**	**100.0**
Satisfaction with life in Canada (Wave 1)				
Completely satisfied	63.8	1.078	18.70	18.0
Satisfied (reference group)	63.1	1.000	53.90	53.5
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	62.7	0.940	17.60	17.8
Dissatisfied	62.7	0.887	8.00	8.1
Completely dissatisfied	64.7	0.922	1.40	1.3
Experience in Canada (Wave 1)				
Much better than expected	63.5	0.952	13.30	13.0
Somewhat better than expected	62.1	0.944	22.40	23.3
About what expected (reference group)	62.8	1.000	39.20	39.5
Somewhat worse than expected	64.4	1.091	20.60	19.4
Much worse than expected	65.3	1.166	3.90	3.5
Would come to Canada again (Wave 1)				
Yes (reference group)	63.2	1.000	88.90	88.0
No	62.3	0.935	8.60	8.9
Not stated	57.8	1.022	2.50	3.1
Sex				
Male (reference group)	62.1	1.000	49.00	50.9
Female	63.9	1.098	51.00	49.1
Age group				
15 to 24	62.1	0.877	16.00	16.7
25 to 34 (reference group)	62.3	1.000	39.50	40.6
35 to 44	67.6	1.279*	28.30	23.1
45 to 54	61.8	1.033	9.50	10.0
55 or older	54.2	0.836	6.70	9.6
Admission category				
Family-class immigrant	58.4	0.738*	24.90	30.2
Skilled immigrant (reference group)	64.4	1.000	61.70	58.0
Business immigrant	61.0	0.853	5.60	6.0
Refugee	69.5	0.919	6.60	4.9
Other	72.0	1.092	1.30	0.8

* $p<0.05$

Notes: The reference groups are for the logistic regression. Other variables in the logistic regression model include education at landing, intended occupation and country of origin.

All in all, recently landed immigrants are a highly mobile population (Hou 2007), and locating each LSIC respondent two and again four years after landing was a challenge. Yet even though the LSIC has an attrition rate of 37%, there is no evidence to indicate that this introduced a systematic bias in reported assessments of life in Canada.

4 Results

4.1 Descriptive results

Most LSIC respondents have positive assessments of their life in Canada. Six months and four years after landing, just over 54.2% said they were satisfied with life in Canada and almost 19% said they were very, or completely, satisfied (Table 3). Combined, 73% of respondents provided a favourable response to this question, 17.7% of respondents were neutral in their assessment, saying they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with life in Canada, while 9.4% said they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Respondents were somewhat less positive about the extent to which their expectations about life in Canada had been met. In all three waves, almost 25% said that life in Canada was somewhat, or much worse, than they had expected. Whether or not these individuals had overly optimistic expectations at the outset cannot be determined. The largest share of respondents—39% in Wave 1 and about 33% in Waves 2 and 3—said that life in Canada was about what they expected it would be. Finally, 36% of respondents said life in Canada was somewhat better or much better than they had expected at Wave 1, with this share increasing to 41% and 43% at Waves 2 and 3.

Considering our third measure, the vast majority of LSIC respondents (87% to 91%) said that, if they had to make the decision again, they would still come to Canada.

Table 3
Descriptive overview of subjective assessments of life in Canada

	Wave 1, six months after landing	Wave 2, two years after landing	Wave 3, four years after landing
		percent	
Satisfaction with life in Canada			
Very/completely satisfied	18.8	..	17.5
Satisfied	54.2	..	55.9
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17.7	..	19.4
Dissatisfied	8.0	..	4.2
Very/completely dissatisfied	1.4	..	2.9
Total	100.0	..	100.0
Met expectations - Life in Canada is...			
Much better than expected	13.4	14.4	14.8
Somewhat better than expected	22.9	26.9	28.3
About what expected	39.4	33.8	32.7
Somewhat worse than expected	20.4	20.5	19.2
Much worse than expected	3.9	4.4	5.0
Total	100	100	100
If had to make the decision again would you come to Canada?			
Yes	91.2	88.2	86.5
No	8.8	11.8	13.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: The percentage distribution of assessments for each question may not add to 100% because of rounding.

4.2 Multivariate Results

Our multivariate analysis begins with a set of models run on assessments of life in Canada provided four years after landing in Canada.

Demographic characteristics, health status and coping

LSIC results are consistent with many of the findings reported in the research literature. For example, the often-found U-shape relationship between age and satisfaction is evident, with immigrants aged 35 to 44 less likely to be satisfied with life in Canada than their younger and older counterparts (Table 4). Holding other characteristics at their mean values, the predicted probability of being satisfied or very satisfied is 2 percentage points higher among immigrants aged 25 to 34, and 7 percentage points higher among those aged 55 or older, compared with the 35-to-44 year age group.[16] Similarly, 'middle aged' immigrants are less likely than their younger counterparts to report that their expectations have been met or that they would make the same decision again to come to Canada.[17]

16. Throughout this discussion we focus on the combined predicted probabilities of respondents saying they are satisfied, or very satisfied, with life in Canada, and that life in Canada is somewhat better, or much better, than expected.
17. Only about 12,000 of the 157,600 respondents represented in the LSIC were aged 55 or older. This may account for the lack of a significant difference between 'middle aged' and older respondents on these measures.

Table 4
Characteristics associated with LSIC respondents' subjective assessments of their life in Canada four years after landing, Canada, 2005

	Satisfaction with life in Canada		Experiences in Canada relative to expectations		Would make same decision to immigrate	
	Regression coefficients	Predicted probability of being satisfied or very satisfied	Regression coefficients	Predicted probability of life in Canada being somewhat better or much better than expected	Regression coefficients	Predicted probability of saying would come again to Canada
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Sex						
Male (reference group)	0.000	74	0.000	42	0.000	84
Female	0.089	75	0.092	44	-0.001	84
Age group						
15 to 24	0.156	75	0.175 †	45	0.429 *	87
25 to 34	0.134 *	75	0.176 **	45	0.342 **	86
35 to 44 (reference group)	0.000	73	0.000	42	0.000	82
45 to 54	0.015	73	-0.144	38	0.023	82
55 or older	0.419 ***	80	0.113	44	0.294	86
Education at arrival						
Less than high school	0.438 ***	79	0.577 ***	51	0.845 ***	91
High school	0.223 **	76	0.392 ***	47	0.185	85
Post-secondary diploma/ certificate	0.231 **	76	0.308 ***	45	0.130	84
University degree (reference group)	0.000	72	0.000	39	0.000	82
Self-assessed health status						
Excellent	0.305 ***	80	0.147 †	48	0.042	87
Very good (reference group)	0.000	75	0.000	44	0.000	86
Good	-0.249 ***	71	-0.262 ***	39	-0.405 ***	81
Fair or poor	-0.438 ***	67	-0.292 **	38	-0.556 ***	79
Capacity to cope with everyday tasks						
Excellent	0.158 †	77	0.097	46	0.190	87
Very good	0.000	75	0.000	44	0.000	85
Good	-0.144 *	72	-0.147 *	40	-0.298 **	81
Fair or poor	-0.414 **	67	-0.481 **	33	-0.349 †	80
Immigrant category						
Skilled worker - principal applicant (reference group)	0.000	72	0.000	38	0.000	82
Skilled worker - spouse and dependents	0.049	73	0.092	40	0.090	83
Family class	0.405 ***	79	0.492 ***	49	0.417 **	87
Refugee	0.438 **	79	0.713 ***	54	0.996 ***	92
Other	-0.011	72	0.102	40	0.385 *	86

See the notes at the end of the table.

Table 4 (continued)

Characteristics associated with LSIC respondents' subjective assessments of their life in Canada four years after landing, Canada, 2005

	Satisfaction with life in Canada		Experiences in Canada relative to expectations		Would make same decision to immigrate	
	Regression coefficients	Predicted probability of being satisfied or very satisfied	Regression coefficients	Predicted probability of life in Canada being somewhat better or much better than expected	Regression coefficients	Predicted probability of saying would come again to Canada
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Lived in Canada before						
No (reference group)	0.000	74	0.000	42	0.000	84
Yes	0.253 *	78	0.224 **	47	0.392 *	88
Perceived discrimination/unfair treatment						
None (reference group)	0.000	77	0.000	46	0.000	88
Rarely	-0.215 *	74	-0.334 **	39	-0.337 *	84
Sometimes	-0.620 ***	66	-0.652 ***	32	-0.911 ***	75
Most or all the time	-1.134 ***	55	-1.321 ***	20	-1.576 ***	63
Difficulty adapting to life in Canada						
No need to adapt (reference group)	0.000	76	0.000	42	0.000	85
Adapted without difficulty	-0.005	75	0.092 †	44	0.047	86
Adapted with difficulty	-0.320 ***	70	-0.067	41	-0.515 ***	79
Problem accessing housing						
No (reference group)	0.000	75	0.000	43	0.000	84
Yes	-0.193 *	71	-0.255 **	38	-0.049	83
Problem accessing health care						
No (reference group)	0.000	75	0.000	44	0.000	85
Yes	-0.206 **	72	-0.349 ***	37	-0.178 *	82
Problem accessing education						
No (reference group)	0.000	75	0.000	44	0.000	85
Yes	-0.339 ***	69	-0.371 ***	36	-0.308 **	81
Perceptions of neighbours						
Not met them; don't know; ambiguous	-0.294 ***	69	-0.225 ***	38	-0.287 **	82
Unfriendly	-0.184	71	0.146	46	0.104	86
Friendly (reference group)	0.000	74	0.000	43	0.000	85
Very friendly	0.491 ***	82	0.173 **	47	0.158	87
Contact with friends in Canada						
Daily	0.123	77	-0.100	42	0.044	84
Weekly (reference group)	0.000	75	0.000	44	0.000	84
Monthly or less, no friends	-0.124 *	72	-0.152 **	41	0.042	84

See the notes at the end of the table.

Table 4 (concluded)
Characteristics associated with LSIC respondents' subjective assessments of their life in Canada four years after landing, Canada, 2005

	Satisfaction with life		Experiences in Canada		Would make same	
	Regression coefficients	Predicted probability of being satisfied or very satisfied	Regression coefficients	Predicted probability of life in Canada being somewhat better or much better than expected	Regression coefficients	Predicted probability of saying would come again to Canada
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Participation in religious services						
None (reference group)	0.000	74	0.000	42	0.000	84
Less than weekly	-0.026	74	0.253 †	47	0.010	84
Weekly or more	0.118	76	0.426 ***	51	0.384 *	88
Organizational participation						
None (reference group)	0.000	74	0.000	42	0.000	84
Less than weekly	-0.050	73	0.108	45	0.063	84
Weekly or more	0.107	76	0.111	45	0.257	87
Full-time employment status						
Not employed full-time (reference group)	0.000	72	0.000	42	0.000	84
Employed full-time	0.198 *	76	0.094	44	0.018	84
Personal income						
No income (reference group)	0.000	73	0.000	40	0.000	83
$1 to $9,999	-0.053	72	-0.113	38	0.088	84
$10,000 to $19,999	0.023	73	0.003	40	-0.026	83
$20,000 to $29,999	-0.022	73	0.070	42	0.022	83
$30,000 to $39,999	0.032	74	0.168	44	-0.072	82
$40,000 to $59,999	0.327 **	78	0.495 ***	51	0.289 †	86
$60,000 or more	0.545 ***	82	0.613 ***	54	0.334	87
Housing tenure						
Own without mortgage	0.390 **	78	0.177	44	0.206	86
Own with mortgage	0.275 ***	77	0.286 ***	46	-0.023	84
Rent (reference group)	0.000	72	0.000	40	0.000	84
Other	0.107	74	0.233 †	45	0.139	86

† p<0.1
* p<0.05
** p<0.01
*** p<0.001
Note: LSIC: Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada.

There is a negative correlation between educational attainment and satisfaction, as university graduates are least likely to be satisfied with life in Canada (a predicted probability of 72%) and immigrants with less than high school education are most likely (a predicted probability of 79%). Immigrants with high school diplomas or non-university credentials fall within this range. The negative correlation between education and met expectations is stronger, with a 12-percentage-point difference between university graduates and individuals with less than high school education (at 39% and 51% respectively). This correlation remains significant with health status, employment status and personal income in the model, suggesting that the correlation between education and satisfaction is more direct among recent immigrants than it may be among the general population of immigrants. Turning to our third outcome measure, immigrants

with less than high school education are most likely to say they would make the same decision to come to Canada, but responses do not vary across other groups. Considering gender, the responses of men and women do not differ significantly.[18]

Consistent with the literature, there is a strong correlation between health and assessments of life in Canada. Immigrants who have less favourable assessments of their health (i.e., they rate it as fair or poor) are significantly less likely to say they are satisfied with life in Canada than those rating their health as excellent (a 13-percentage-point difference in predicted probabilities). Differences in the other two outcome measures range from 8 to 10 percentage points between these groups. A similar correlation is evident between self-assessed capacity to deal with everyday tasks in life and assessments of life in Canada, with those individuals who rate their capacity as fair or poor, being 7 to 13 percentage points less likely to provide positive assessments than those rating their capacity as excellent.

The immigration process and settlement experiences

Immigrants' assessments of Canada are consistently and strongly correlated with the admission category by which they entered the country. Principal applicants in the skilled worker category express less favourable assessments than immigrants in the family class and refugee categories. This is most evident in terms of the extent to which life in Canada has been somewhat better or much better than expected (differences of 11 and 16 percentage points). Turning to prior residence in Canada, immigrants who have lived here before are more likely to express positive assessments than those who have not, with differences of 4 to 5 percentage points on the three outcome measures.

During their third interview (which occurred 4 years after landing), LSIC respondents were asked if they had experienced discrimination or unfair treatment over the previous 24 months and if so, how often this had occurred. Most respondents (72%) said they had not experienced discrimination or unfair treatment, while 28% said they had. Looking more closely at the response categories, 9% of all respondents said they had rarely experienced discrimination or unfair treatment over the previous 24 months, 15% said they had sometimes experienced such treatment, and 4% said they had experienced such treatment most, or all, of the time. There is a strong monotonic correlation between perceived discrimination and assessments of life in Canada. Respondents who said they had not experienced discrimination had a 77% predicted probability of being satisfied or very satisfied with life in Canada, with that probability declining to 66% among those who said they had experienced discrimination sometimes, and declining further to 55% among the small group that said they experienced discrimination most of the time or all of the time. The same large, monotonic decline is evident on the 'met expectations' and 'come again' outcome measures.

Considering the adjustment of 'behavioural repertoires' to a new social and cultural context, 41% of LSIC respondents said they did not have to change their values or behaviours to adapt to life in Canada, 38% said they had to make changes, but did not find this difficult, while the remaining 20% said they found it difficult making such changes. Individuals experiencing difficulties were less likely than others to express satisfaction with life in Canada, or to say they would make the same decision again to immigrate (differences of 6 percentage points). Difficulties adapting were not significantly correlated with the extent to which expectations had been met.

18. Marital status and the presence of children were included in earlier models, but were not significant and were excluded from the final model.

Turning to the logistical aspects of settlement, problems encountered accessing housing, health care and education/training are all negatively correlated with satisfaction with life in Canada and the extent to which expectations have been met. Problems encountered accessing health care and education/training are also negatively correlated with whether immigrants would make the same decision again to come to Canada. Differences in predicted probabilities across these variables range from 3 to 8 percentage points.

Social capital

Of the four social capital variables (frequency of contact with friends; perceived friendliness of neighbours; frequency of attendance at religious services, and frequency of involvement in other groups or organizations) included in the analysis, three are positively correlated with assessments of life in Canada. Immigrants who perceive their neighbours as very friendly are more likely to be satisfied with life in Canada than immigrants who do not know their neighbours or express neutral perceptions of them (a difference of 13 percentage points). A similar pattern is evident in the extent to which expectations have been met (a difference of 9 percentage points). Likewise, more frequent contact with friends is positively associated with satisfaction and met expectations. Turning to ties with groups and institutions, participation in religious services is positively correlated with met expectations in Canada and the willingness to make the same decision again. The fourth social capital variable—participation in other types of groups or organizations—is not correlated with any of these outcomes.[19]

Material well-being

Turning to measures of material well-being, there is a positive correlation between employment status and satisfaction, but this difference is fairly small (at 4 percentage points), relative to other variables. Employment status is not significantly associated with the other two outcome measures. Alternative formulations of the employment status variable yield similar results.

Personal income is correlated with two of the three outcome measures—satisfaction and met expectations. Compared with individuals who have no personal income, those with incomes of $40,000 or more are significantly more likely to be satisfied with life in Canada (differences of 5 to 9 percentage points), and to say life in Canada is somewhat better or much better than expected (differences of 11 to 14 percentage points). Among the 80% of LSIC respondents with personal incomes below $40,000, assessments of Canada do not vary significantly across income groups. The same patterns are evident when household income is substituted in the models.

Finally, housing tenure is positively correlated with assessments of life in Canada, as home owners are more likely than renters to say they are satisfied with life in Canada and that their expectations have been met.

Comparisons with the country of origin

Turning to the variables included in our supplementary models, 43% of LSIC respondents said their material well-being in Canada is better than it was prior to immigrating, 29% said it is about the same, and 27% said it is worse. Immigrants in the skilled worker category expressed the

19. In an earlier version of the analysis, participation in ethnic or immigrant association was included in the model with the expectation that it would be positively correlated with favourable assessments of life in Canada. This was not the case however, and the variable was subsequently included in the organizational participation variable shown in Table 4.

least favourable views in this regard.[20] Considering perceived quality of life, immigrants in all admission categories (83% overall) said their quality of life is better in Canada than it was prior to immigrating, with only modest differences across admissions categories.[21]

The inclusion of these additional variables has fairly modest effects on the other covariates in our analysis. For example, the predicted probability that satisfaction with life in Canada exceeded one's expectations varies by 13 percentage points across educational categories in the base model, with this difference declining to 10 percentage points with the inclusion of the additional variables. Similarly, predicted probabilities decline by, at most, 2 or 3 percentage points on most other covariates. One exception is immigrant admission category. The 16-percentage-point difference between skilled workers and refugees in the predicted probability of life in Canada exceeding one's expectations declines to 7 percentage points with the inclusion of the material well-being, quality of life and GDP per capita variables. Differences between immigrant categories on the other two outcome variables also diminish or disappear.

Immigrants' assessments of their relative material well-being and quality of life are significantly associated with their assessments of life in Canada. Compared with individuals who say their material well-being is better in Canada than it was prior to immigrating, those who say their material well-being is worse are significantly less likely to be satisfied with life in Canada (a difference of 10 percentage points), significantly less likely to say they would make the immigration decision again (a difference of 12 percentage points) and significantly less likely to say their expectations of life in Canada have been exceeded (a difference of 20 percentage points).

Perceptions of relative quality of life in Canada are also correlated with these outcomes, with differences in predicted probabilities across the better and worse categories ranging from 11 to 15 percentage points, although readers are reminded that very few LSIC respondents rate their quality of life in Canada as worse than it had been before.

GDP per capita in the respondent's country of birth is not strongly associated with the likelihood of expectations being met or making the same immigration decision again, but is positively correlated with satisfaction with life in Canada.

Changes in assessments of Canada over time

The results thus far are based on information collected from LSIC respondents approximately four years after arriving in Canada. One question that arises is whether their assessments changed over that four-year period. Outlooks may have been particularly positive during the first six months in Canada, when the promise of a new future lay ahead, but may have become less positive over time, if plans and expectations did not subsequently come to fruition.

A pooled sample combining information collected from respondents six months, two years and four years after landing was constructed, and assessments of Canada were compared across these points in time. Information on four variables—self-assessed coping capacity, perceived discrimination, difficulty adapting to Canada and perceptions of neighbours—are not available in either Wave 1 or Wave 2, and are consequently excluded from these models. Over the

20. More specifically, 35% of immigrants in the skilled worker category said their material well-being in Canada is better, 31% said it is about the same, and 34% said it is worse. Responses did not vary significantly between principal applicants and spouses and dependents. The figures for family-class immigrants are 58%, 29% and 13% respectively, while for refugees they are 69%, 17% and 13% respectively.
21. The figures range from 84% of immigrants in the skilled worker category to 92% of refugees.

period from six months to four years after landing, the likelihood of being satisfied or very satisfied with life in Canada declined by 4 percentage points (net of other factors), while the likelihood of saying that coming to Canada was the right decision declined by 6 percentage points. The likelihood of expectations being met did not change over time.

Other results from the pooled model also warrant comment. First, the change in the predicted probability of being satisfied with life in Canada associated with problems concerning access to housing, health care and training/education are somewhat larger in the models based on the pooled sample (at 6, 6 and 10 percentage points respectively), than they are in the model using Wave 3 data (at 4, 3 and 6 percentage points respectively). While part of this difference may be attributable to the smaller set of covariates included in the pooled model, the difference may also be attributable to the fact that problems accessing housing and training are more frequently reported at six months and two years after landing than they are four years after landing (Schellenberg and Maheux 2007). In this context, problems accessing goods and services would appear to be stronger negative correlates of assessments of life in Canada at earlier points in the settlement process. Second, the change in the predicted probabilities of being satisfied with life in Canada and with life in Canada exceeding one's expectations varies more widely across personal income categories in the pooled sample (achieving significance in four categories), than they do in the Wave 3 data models (achieving significance in two response categories). This may be because the income variable is picking up some of the effects captured by perceived discrimination and other variables not included in the pooled models.

5 Discussion and conclusions

The objective of this paper has been to examine how immigrants in the 2000-2001 landing cohort assess their life in Canada. Four years after landing, about three-quarters of those still in the LSIC sample said they were satisfied, or very satisfied, with life in Canada, and a comparable proportion said their expectations had been met or exceeded. Nearly 9 out of 10 said that, if given the chance, they would make the same decision to come to Canada. One shortcoming of the LSIC is the absence of a control group (such as Canadian born) against which these responses can be compared. Without such a benchmark, it is difficult to say whether the 'three-quarters' figures cited above should be interpreted as 'high' or 'low.' One might have expected positive views to be less prevalent, given the labour market challenges immigrants have generally faced through the 1990s, or perhaps more prevalent given immigrants' favourable views of Canada's social and political environment. Interpretation of absolute levels of satisfaction is thus subject to debate.

An advantage of the LSIC is the opportunity it provides to examine how subjective assessments of life in Canada vary across a broad range of characteristics. Our analysis includes a number of variables—such as age, health status, coping capacity and social ties—that are generally found to be associated with life satisfaction in the subjective well-being literature. Our results, while focusing on a somewhat different set of outcome measures, are consistent with those in that literature. Our analysis also includes numerous other variables that are of particular relevance to immigrants and immigration research.

Within the 2000-2001 landing cohort, positive assessments of life in Canada are less prevalent among immigrants admitted through the skilled worker category, among university degree holders, and among persons aged 35 to 54. The disjuncture between expectations and outcomes is particularly large among the latter group, and they also score lower on the satisfaction question. Assessments of material well-being matter, as the likelihood of life in

Canada falling short of expectations is especially evident among immigrants who believe their material well-being is worse after immigrating than it was before. This takes on added importance, given that one-third of immigrants in the skilled worker category felt worse off in material terms than they were prior to migration.

While economic factors are strongly correlated with subjective assessments of life in Canada, so too are social factors. For example, positive ties with neighbours are associated with an increase in the predicted probability of positive assessments of satisfaction and expectations in the range of 9 to 13 percentage points, while perceptions of discrimination or unfair treatment experienced sometimes, most of the time, or always, are also associated with large decreases in the predicted probabilities of positive assessments. While the deteriorating economic outcomes facing immigrants may appear to be an appropriate starting point for examining subjective assessments of life in Canada, social contexts and viewpoints should not be overlooked.

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